

# Warning Signs of Child Sexual Abuse

Warning signs may include physical signs and sudden changes in behavior and emotions. However, children who have been sexually abused may show no signs at all. And remember, these signs may be caused by other things than sexual abuse.



## Physical signs:

- difficulty walking or sitting,
- redness, rashes, bleeding in the genital or anal area,
- bladder or urinary tract infections, painful bowel movements,
- frequent headaches or stomachaches,
- sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy

## Behavioral and Emotional signs:

- a sudden change in behavior or personality,
- depression, anxiety,
- withdrawing from family, friends or activities,
- acting aggressively,
- problems at school,
- regressing behavior such as wetting their bed or sucking their thumb,
- nightmares, sleep problems,
- showing fear or reluctance to be around people, places and activities,
- acting out sexually,
- showing knowledge of sex that is not age appropriate,
- self destructive behavior such as cutting themselves, eating disorders, alcohol or drug use,

Children who have been sexually abused may also experience feelings of guilt, shame, betrayal, confusion, and embarrassment.

Also, be aware of an older, more dominant child, teenager and/or an adult who seems to want to spend time alone with your child. They may be trying to groom your child for abuse. Grooming involves gaining the trust of the child and family in order to have access to the child with the intention of using them in a sexual way. Be alert to the signs of sexual abuse. If you have been told about abuse or even suspect abuse, report it!

In Illinois, call 1-800-25ABUSE (1-800-252-2873)

**Prevent Child Abuse** Illinois  
[www.preventchildabuseillinois.org](http://www.preventchildabuseillinois.org)

